

COLOR PREFERENCES IN CLOTHING OF A
SELECTED GROUP OF RETIRED WOMEN
65 YEARS OF AGE AND OVER

by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Due in large part to the technical, economic, and social changes resulting from the Industrial Revolution, the death rates in most countries sharing Western Civilization have decreased. One important result of this decrease has been the trend for an increasingly large proportion of the population to reach the older age levels (21).

In 1960, there were 17,000,000 persons in the United States 65 years of age and over (25); this is five times as many as in 1900. While the number of older persons increases, the proportion they represent to the total population also has been rapidly increasing. The 65-and-older age group now represents almost ten percent of the population; in 1900, it was four percent. Women past 65 far outnumber men, and their proportion rises as age increases. There are 121 women for every 100 men past 65; and 157 women for every 100 men past 85 years of age (22). Census experts agree that the older segment of the population will continue to increase, and the projected figure for 1980 is 25,000,000 (5).

Shortly after World War II, it was recognized that the United States was developing a sizable proportion of older persons that had unique problems and interests of which little was known. Social scientists, physicians, economists, governmental officials and others began to focus their attention on the 65-plus group. Interest was first centered on financial and health problems. Today there is much information available on social security, old age pension, medical care programs, and the older person in the labor force. The physiological and nutritional problems of this portion of our population have received considerable attention. The

psychological, developmental, and sociological needs of these persons have begun to be considered in recent years.

The general purpose of the present study is the examination of clothing for the older woman with special emphasis on her color preferences and problems as expressed by women 65 years of age and over found in a selected group in Manhattan, Kansas.

Anspach (1), reported on the clothing research in home economics for the period from 1925-1958 and found that forty-two percent of the studies were concerned with clothing for women. Only one study in that period focused on clothing for older women. Some recent research studies have included clothing problems of older men and women.

Designers and retailers have practically ignored this age group (10).

Take the department store. Today it has a department for almost every age bracket from infant through "matron". But how many departments for old women? How many designers design clothes for the elderly? The old man can find suitable clothing without much trouble, but the old woman finds little that has taken her figure problems into account, and most of what she finds is dark and dismal. She still has her pride and she wants to wear something cheerful and appropriate.

Clothing is one of the essentials of life. It not only provides protection, but it also influences social relationships with people. Careful grooming and dressing can help the elderly persons to maintain their self esteem (15). With the increasing number of older women in our society, their clothing needs and demands should have a greater influence on the type of clothing produced.

Little research has been conducted on older women's color preferences. The references to color for the older woman are generally prescriptive. For example, several authors recommend dull and/or dark colors for the older woman. Each specified the colors that the older woman should or should not wear (7) (9) (23).

The specific objectives for study are:

- 1) To find out whether dull and/or dark colors basically make up the older woman's wardrobe of dresses for afternoon or church wear.
- 2) To determine whether the women believed that changes in weight, changes in the distribution of weight, and changes in hair, skin and eyes in the past five to ten years affect color preferences for church or afternoon dresses.
- 3) To determine whether older women are influenced in their selection of color for afternoon or church dresses.

In undertaking the study, the writer has made the general assumption that older women have an interest in clothing.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Clothing is a vital area of concern in the lives of all people, although the degree of intensity varies. From the cradle to the grave, clothing plays a major role in securing the attention and acceptance of others. It is a visible expression of personality and social identity, and clothing is often used as a means of initial appraisal before acquaintances are made (16).

Clothing needs are the same for the older persons as they were in earlier years plus a greater emphasis must be placed on preserving an attractive appearance to mask the ravages of time. The image conveyed by clothing is important in communicating identity to others, and it is equally important in terms of self-esteem and self-image. As the older person loses some sources of psychological well-being and ego enhancement such as income, physical vigor, friends related to work and a feeling of being needed, clothing becomes more important (16).

Bader (2) reports that older women consider clothing important, and they feel that an effort should be made to be attractive and neat. Clothing was just as important as it ever had been to fifty-eight percent of the group interviewed; and twenty-eight percent stated that it was more important now than when they were younger.

Color is an important aspect of clothing, as it makes an impression on both the individual and those with whom he comes in contact. According to Morton (23), "color attracts, repels, comes forward, recedes, stimulates, subdues, and quiets".

On the basis of research concerning color, Ketcham (19) states that as soon as infants can distinguish colors, they choose red over other colors;

children from three to four years of age prefer yellow. Sex becomes important in the color choices from thirteen to fifteen years of age and girls prefer red and boys prefer blue. Youths eighteen to twenty-one prefer dark colors, but avoid wearing them; gayer-colored clothes are chosen to live up to other's expectations. "People age fifty-five to eighty or older tend to choose dark colors only because they believe people expect them to be conservative and sedate; their actual preferences are the opposite, with gay pink the top favorite."

Reports concerning aging indicate the existence of certain stereotypes associated with older people, especially in the type of clothing which they wear. The appropriate clothing for the older woman consists of dull, drab colors and plain styles. The Cornell study (17) stated that the stereotypes of old age become "self-fulfilling" prophecies for the older woman. Thus, an older woman might select a particular style or color of dress because she felt it was characteristic for her age although she did not like it.

Ketcham (18) states that "consumer preference is a sometime thing", and it necessitates occasional surveys. Color preferences vary from place to place, year to year, age group to age group, and economic level to economic level. Cultural background, world conditions, season, time of day, occupation and social participation also affect color preferences.

Cabot (8) found that the dull and/or dark colors which the authorities recommend seem "old" to the women sixty-five and over, because the women consider themselves fifteen to twenty-years younger than their chronological years indicate. Their feeling would coincide with Bernard Baruch who said, "To me, old age is always fifteen years older than I am".

Authorities in clothing suggest that color preferences tend to stabilize as the woman becomes older; some say over forty, but others state sixty-five

and older. The colors which a woman liked and wore at one stage of her life she may dislike in later years (13). This could be due to a change in weight, the change in distribution of weight, and/or a change in skin, hair or eye coloring.

Research studies have provided much information about the physical changes which are likely to accompany aging; and many of these are changes which create some of the problems older women may have in clothing color selection. There may be a decrease in stature due to changes in the spine, inability to maintain an erect posture, or to a thinning of the weight-bearing cartilage. Aging may be accompanied by an increase in bulk, particularly in the size of the abdomen, hips, and thighs, and in the waistline; often to the extent that there is little or no apparent waistline. In a study of a group of Georgia women 45-55, Blair (4) found that over half of the women weighed an average of nineteen to twenty pounds over the ideal weight given in the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company's tables. In addition to the increase in weight and bulk, there may be rounding shoulders, a sagging bustline, legs less shapely, unattractive elbows, and a dowagers hump, a pad of fat at the base of the neck in the back. The change most often checked was a thickened waistline.

There are other physical changes which may occur and affect the appearance (28). The face may become thin, making the facial features appear more prominent; muscles in the upper arm may sag; veins in the hands may become more protrudant; and double chin may develop; crepiness may develop in the skin and neck.

Atrophy of the skin cells may produce a condition known as brown spots (27). They appear on the hands and face and are more pronounced in women. The dilated blood vessels and thinning skin can give the skin a blueish cast. The yellowish tinge of the sclera and the skin and reddening of the

eyelids may occur. The texture and tone of the skin changes, and wrinkles appear because of the subcutaneous fat. Skin changes are accompanied by graying, dulling, thinning and stiffening of the hair. Gilbert (13) suggests that the changes in the hair and skin are probably the most obvious and the most personally distressing changes which are likely to accompany aging.

It must be emphasized that not all older women will undergo all of the physical changes which have been mentioned, and that those who do, will do so in varying degrees, and with no definite relationship to chronological age.

When the color of the skin and hair change, the older person may find some colors very becoming which were formerly unbecoming, and of course, the opposite is true. After a woman's hair turns gray or white, she may be attractive in colors which were unattractive before her hair changed. Reds and pinks may have been avoided by young women with ruddy complexions because it emphasized the red in their skin. As these women become older, the skin becomes paler and reds and pinks are quite becoming (24).

Others are limited in choices of colors as they grow older because the skin may have become sallow (24). The changes in coloring occur gradually and individuals may not realize that these changes are taking place. The women might be more attractive if they realized that new colors would be flattering. The women have lived many years with the idea that they "can" or "cannot" wear certain colors, and it is hard for the older person to change their ideas of what is becoming to them.

The Cornell study (17) states that older women may feel that dull, drab colors should be worn by aging women but Burris-Meyer (7) states that limiting the older woman to black as a suitable color for her older years is a mistake. Black drains the color from the skin tones, and it is unflattering

to the yellower skin tones which come with aging. When blacks are in dull textured materials, such as dull crepes or serges, it is even more trying to the older woman's complexion. A rich dark color is recommended as a substitute for black whenever possible because the associations with black are very depressing. In the later years, a woman needs to have as much color as possible, although colors should not be too bright. Dark reds, dark blues, warm brown and dark blue greens are quite complimentary to the aging woman.

Weinberg (29) advises the large or stout individuals to wear black, if they want to minimize their stature. A purer color is more "eye filling", and it is likely to accentuate the girth of a larger person by calling attention to it. A dull textured black tends to shrink the figure because it "offers the sharpest definition of contour against the atmospheric gray".

The woman advancing in years and increasing in weight at the same time has conflicting advice about the colors she should choose. If she wishes to minimize her figure, she should choose black; but if she wants to choose the most flattering color for her aging hair, skin, and eyes, she would refrain from selecting a black garment. Weinberg (29) states that dresses should be planned for the figure as a whole, but the face should be the dominant feature in the plan.

Shipley, Bartley, Bader and Ebeling (26) (3) (2) (12) found that older women would like wider assortments from which to select their clothing and that they would like better styling, better fitting clothes and more color. Haggett (14) found that women who wore the larger sizes expressed more dissatisfaction with the variety of colors from which to choose than did women who wore other sizes.

Blue has been found to be the favorite color for dresses in every study with older women on color preferences (22). Green is the next most popular.

There is less agreement on the least-liked color; Decker (11) found it to be red-yellow, and Bivins (6) results showed that brown, a dark red-yellow, was the least liked with red next most disliked.

The women in the study done by Bader (2) in Iowa City, Iowa were asked about color preferences, and, as other investigators have found, blue was the favorite color. Forty-two of the sixty women reporting chose some shade of blue.

The majority of the 148 women 55 years and over in the Metropolitan area of Cincinnati studied by Shipley (26) preferred subdued colors. Color preferences were in the blues; and navy was especially popular with the older women.

Decker (11) used the Munsell System of Color Notations for analyzing specific color preferences of twenty-four women 65 years and older in Fenton, Michigan. The system was used to "discuss color preferences accurately and intelligently". In Decker's study (11), the wardrobes of the women were basically conservative in color containing dull and/or dark hues for the most part. The women said they preferred the lighter values and brighter chromas, but they actually wore the darker values and duller chromas. Their favorite hues were blues. Their color preferences agreed with the authorities recommendations that older women should wear dull and/or dark colors.

Ketcham (18) offers a possible hypothesis as to why many older people are "blue-thirsty". He offers as an explanation the possibility that with advancing years eye fluids tend to yellow and filter out blue light.

Research on older women's clothing has gained momentum in the past decade, particularly at the university level, but very little research has been done in depth with older women's color preferences in clothing. There have been research studies concerning older women's problems in buying

ready-made dresses, studies concerning the personal and social functions of dress, and studies concerning the factors that affect dress selection. With the exception of Decker's study (11), research studying color preferences of older women has not gone beyond the prescriptive level. Decker used the Munsel System of Color Notations in communicating color preferences with the older women. Other studies have not used visual color charts as the respondent and interviewer communicated about color preferences.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURES

An exploratory study using the interview technique was selected to gain insight concerning the older woman's color preferences and to find out some of the attitudes about the choices she makes. Landis (20) states that the personal interview is more feasible than the questionnaire with older people, because they usually have the time and are often lonely and enjoy meeting new people. Both subjective and objective questions were developed for the interview schedule. The check list questions were used when possible because they were quick and insured that the same information would be covered by all the interviewees. The open-end questions allowed the women to answer freely without influence from possible stated answers. Consideration was given to the psychological sequence of the questions on the interview schedule.

In discussing color preferences with the interviewee, a sample fabric color chart was used. The satin fabric chart for Spring, 1966, contained sixty samples in a variety of hues, values, and intensities. The chart did not contain the complete spectrum; there were fewer hues of yellow and purple, and all of the samples were of strong intensity. The chart did help in the communication between the interviewer and interviewee. Previous experiences in seeking color preferences lead the researcher to use the color chart to facilitate communication. Other research has shown when women were asked their favorite color in clothing, many women merely stated "blue". This color chart displayed "blue" ranging from a blue green through a light and medium blue, and blue black. The chart was used to identify the color nearest to the color the interviewee had in mind.

Questions were developed to find out whether dull and/or dark colors basically make up the older woman's wardrobe. The respondent's favorite colors in clothing and essential colors in clothing were investigated. The women's summer color preferences, fall color preferences, least liked colors, predominant wardrobe colors, and factors influencing color selection were included in the interview schedule.

To discover whether the bodily changes that accompany aging affect the older woman's color preferences for church or afternoon dresses, another series of questions was developed. The changes in skin color and texture, the changes in the appearance of hair and eyes, the changes in bodily weight and the changes in distribution of weight in the last five to ten years were noted by the respondent and the observable aging characteristics were noted by the interviewer. The ready-made dress size worn by the respondents was correlated with their satisfaction of the range of dress colors available.

Questions were developed to determine whether older women are influenced in their selection of color for afternoon or church dresses. The frequency with which the respondents shopped with companions, their relationship to the shopping companion, and the influence the shopping companion had on the color of dresses purchased were included in the interview schedule.

Pretesting the Schedule. The preliminary draft of the twenty-three question interview schedule was administered to six women sixty-five years of age and over. Three of the women were clerical workers at Kansas State University, two of the women were widowed homemakers, and a third widow had been a professional woman.

Pretesting the schedule was done to clarify the questions, to identify unforeseen problems, to determine some of the categories for the open-end

questions, and to estimate the time required for the interview. The researcher gained experience in interviewing women of this age by the pretest. Some of the questions were reworded and clarified, and the sequence of some of the questions was adjusted to obtain answers more easily. The final interview schedule appears in Appendix A.

Selection of the Sample. Retired professional and clerical women from Kansas State University were used in the study. The Kansas State University annual budget was used to secure the names of the retired faculty and clerical women.

The retiree section of the budget includes the names of both the women and men who have retired from service with the University. A list was compiled from the budget containing the names of the female retirees, the department or position from which they retired, and the dates of their birth and retirement. The list contained fifty-seven women's names. The names of those women living outside of Manhattan and those physically ill were removed from the list. Also removed from the list were the physical education storekeeper and cafeteria cook because neither could be classified as faculty or clerical personnel. To the list were added the names of three retired faculty members and one retired clerical worker whose names were not found on the budget. The final list that was used to draw a random sample contained thirty-six names. Twenty-four names were randomly drawn from the list as the original sample.

When the twenty-four original names were contacted, seventeen gave an affirmative answer to be interviewed, three could not be contacted, one had died since the budget was published, and three refused to cooperate. The reasons given for not cooperating were that they were too old, not well,

or too busy. Additional names were drawn and called until a sample of twenty-four was obtained. When the writer had reached twenty-four names, she had contacted thirty-four of the thirty-six names on the list. The final list contained fourteen faculty and ten clerical workers.

Making the Interview. The original contact with each of the women was made by a personal telephone call. The writer identified herself as a graduate student in the Department of Clothing and Textiles at Kansas State University and explained that her research project was a study of the color preferences in clothing of a selected group of Manhattan women. Permission was asked to interview the respondent about her color preferences in clothing in her home at a time most convenient to her. The women were told that the interview would take from thirty to forty-five minutes. Some women explained that they would not be of much help, because they were so old. To these women, the researcher explained that the selected group were retired faculty and clerical women from the University.

A decorative post card was sent to each women as a reminder of the appointment. The post cards were sent to arrive the day before the appointment since some appointments had been made two weeks in advance. One woman was sick when the writer arrived and a second appointment was made.

The women appeared to enjoy the interview and the opportunity to visit with someone. Although the actual interview lasted thirty minutes, the interviewer spent one to two hours with each woman. Almost every woman commented that she was glad to be of assistance and that she had enjoyed the visit.

Method of Analysis. A descriptive analysis of the schedule was made with some averages being tabulated. Tables were set up with total numbers. In

a few cases when differences seemed apparent between the former faculty members and the clerical workers, the groups were tabulated separately. The sample was not large enough for statistical analysis, yet the information may indicate need for research in certain aspects of the study.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The primary colors, secondary colors and neutrals were used in categorizing the color preferences of the selected group of retired Manhattan women 65 years of age and over. The red and blue categories were further divided because of results obtained on the pretest. Although the interviewee stated "blue" as her favorite color, the blue ranged from a blue green through a blue black. Thus, the blue category was subdivided to include blue green, light blue, medium blue, and blue black. The red category was subdivided to include pink.

The researcher did not ask to see any of the actual garments in the women's wardrobes. Although, eight of the twenty-four respondents, four faculty and four clerical, asked the researcher to look at certain items of clothing either before, after or during the interview. Some of the women wanted the interviewer to use her judgment about the colors while others seemed to want reassurance for their stated answers.

Table I summarizes the favorite colors in clothing for the women interviewed. The number of choices ranged from one to five, and a total of sixty-five choices were made. The cool colors--green, blue, and purple--accounted for sixty-six percent of the favorite colors. Almost fifty-five percent of the choices were made in the range of blues. When the category of blues was analyzed further, eighteen percent of the choices were medium blue, sixteen percent of the choices were blue green and sixteen percent of the choices were navy. Pink accounted for thirteen percent of the stated favorite color preferences.

TABLE I

FAVORITE COLORS IN CLOTHING AND COLOR
CHOICES FOR SUMMER AND FALL
CHURCH OR AFTERNOON DRESSES

	Red	Pink	Orange	Yellow	Green	Blue Green	Light Blue	Medium Blue	Navy	Purple	Brown	Black	White	Gray	TOTAL
Favorite Colors for Clothing	4	9	1	0	8	10	3	12	10	0	1	3	1	3	65
Color Choices Provided a Dress for Summer Would be Purchased	1	12	0	1	7	6	4	8	1	0	1	0	1	2	45
Color Choices Provided a Dress for Fall Would be Purchased	8	1	0	0	6	4	0	4	1	1	4	1	1	1	32

The interviews were conducted during the last week of April and the first two weeks of May. The respondents were asked the color or colors of dresses they might buy for summer. Some of the women replied that they had already bought a dress for summer wear, and they proceeded to describe the color of the dress in reply to the question.

Provided a dress for summer could be purchased, forty-two percent of the respondents would choose a color in the range of blues. When each color was analyzed separately, a difference was noted in the results. Pink ranked first as the favorite color for summer dresses by twenty-nine percent of the women; medium blue was the choice of seventeen percent of the women; and green was the choice of fifteen percent of the women.

The following reasons were given by the women for choosing the color or colors for summer church or afternoon dresses. Eight of the women commented that the color chosen would be light, cool or fresh for summer wear. Eight remarked that the color was becoming to them, and four of these women cited specific physical features that were flattered when they wore the color. The chosen color was pleasing or satisfying to six of the respondents and was the primary reason for their selection. Two women felt that the color would add variety to their wardrobe, and two women chose summer dress colors that would correlate with their summer accessories. One commented that the color was practical for summer, and one chose a light color because she felt that heavy colors make a person look older.

Provided a dress for fall could be purchased, the respondents were asked the color of afternoon or church dress they would select. The women stated one or two colors and a total of thirty-two choices were made. Table I shows forty percent of the women chose red as their favorite color for a fall dress. Green was selected by eighteen percent of the respondents;

and blue green, medium blue and brown were each selected by eight percent of the women. No evident discrepancy was noted in the color choices of faculty or clerical women.

A wide variety of reasons were given when the women were asked the reasons for their choice of fall colors. Six of the women reported that the chosen colors were becoming to them; four "just liked the color"; three stated that the colors would be nice for the holidays, dull winter days, or for fall; and three chose the colors because they went with their accessories, especially their winter coats. Each of the following reasons were stated once: the color was dignified, the color was conservative, the color added warmth, and the color would be appropriate for many occasions. One woman selected the color because of habit and another because it would probably be the only color a small woman could find.

After the respondent had been asked about her color preferences, she was asked to consider the factors that influenced her selection in color for an afternoon or church dress. A check list of seven factors was presented to the respondent, as seen in Table II. All twenty-four of the respondents stated that they considered if the color was becoming and if they liked the color. Twenty of the respondents considered if the color in a dress would be appropriate for their social demands; eighteen considered present accessories when considering a dress color; and seventeen considered if the color would be appropriate for more than one season. Fifty-eight percent of the women considered if the color was basic. Ninety percent of the clerical workers considered if a dress was basic in color and only thirty-six percent of the faculty members considered this factor. Twenty-nine percent of the women commented that they considered if a color was in current fashion.

TABLE II
FACTORS INFLUENCING COLOR PREFERENCES
FOR CHURCH OR AFTERNOON DRESSES

Factors	Faculty n=14	Clerical n=10	Total n=24
Becoming Color	14	10	24
Like Color	14	10	24
Appropriate Color for Social Demands	13	7	20
Color Correlation with Accessories	11	7	18
Appropriate Color for Many Seasons	9	8	17
Basic Color	5	9	14
Color in Current Fashion	3	4	7

The women were asked if there was a color of church or afternoon dress they would always want to include in their wardrobe. Table III shows that nine of the respondents had no particular color that was essential in their wardrobe. Fifteen women declared that one or more colors would always be in their wardrobe and nine chose black, six chose navy, and five chose blue. Fifty percent of the retired faculty women had no particular color which needed always to be included in their wardrobe. Eighty percent of the clerical workers felt that black, blue and/or navy were essential colors for church or afternoon dresses.

The women were asked why they always wanted to include a dress of their stated color in their wardrobe. The fifteen responding women, seven faculty

and eight clerical workers, gave the following reasons: six stated that the color was appropriate for all occasions; four revealed that it was a basic or practical color. One woman enumerated by saying, "You can wear the dress often, and those who see you aren't as conscious that you are wearing the same dress over and over". Three women felt that the color was most flattering or becoming to them; two mentioned that accessories were easy to harmonize with the color; two felt that the color was flattering for a stout or large person; two mentioned that the color was necessary for funerals; and one stated that she felt less conspicuous in black.

TABLE III
COLORS ALWAYS WANTED IN WARDROBE

Color	Faculty n=11	Clerical n=10	Total n=21
Black	6	3	9
Navy	3	3	6
Blue	1	4	5
No particular color	7	2	9

The least liked colors for afternoon or church dresses were investigated. Most of the respondents stated more than one color, when asked their least liked color in clothing. Table IV shows thirty-five percent of the women stated that the family of browns were their least liked color. Yellow, including the range of golds, was chosen as the least liked color in clothing by sixteen percent of the women; and sixteen percent of the women selected red. The warm colors, red, yellow, orange and brown accounted for seventy-two

percent of the colors avoided by women in their selection of dresses for church or afternoon wear. Purple, considered a cool color in this study, accounted for over half of the cool colors disliked.

TABLE IV
THE LEAST LIKED COLORS FOR CHURCH OR AFTERNOON DRESSES
FOR A SELECTED GROUP OF WOMEN
65 YEARS OF AGE AND OVER

Color	Frequency
Brown	15
Yellow	7
Red	7
Purple	4
Black	3
Orange	2
White	1
Blue	1
Navy	1

A variety of reasons were stated by the women when asked why they disliked a color. Fourteen of the women stated that changes in their skin or hair color accounted for their disliking a particular color or colors for clothing. Three women avoided a color because it was somber, drab or depressing; three women did not like the color; and three women associated the color with early family habits or incidents. "An elderly relative had everything in lavender, and it didn't look good on her. I didn't like her

and I haven't liked the color since." Two respondents stated that the color was not appropriate for an older woman, and two felt that the color was too bright. The color was not appropriate for a large woman and the color did not coordinate with the wardrobe were voiced by different women. One faculty respondent stated, "These colors (black, navy and brown) put me in a corner, and I stay there. I am not a very warm person naturally, and I need vivid colors to make me more outgoing".

Six of the twenty-four respondents stated that they had dresses in their wardrobe in their least liked color. The women acquired the dresses in a variety of ways. One woman received the dress as a gift, one was influenced by a sales clerk to purchase the dress, and another bought the dress and was dissatisfied when she wore it. Other reasons were: it was the only color available, a change in hair color made the dress undesirable, and the dress was not the same color that had been ordered.

The respondents were asked if they related their additional purchases with the colors in their present wardrobe. Seventy-three percent of the women stated that they did relate their purchases with their wardrobe. There was no significant difference in the responses of the retired faculty members or clerical workers.

After the women had been questioned about their favorite color, their color choices in dresses for summer and fall, and their least liked colors, they were asked to state the color or colors that were predominant in their wardrobe. Table V shows sixty-seven percent of the retired women 65 years of age and over reported that blue predominated in their wardrobe of dresses. Ninety percent of the clerical workers had predominantly blue wardrobes,

and fifty percent of the faculty members include blue as one of the predominant colors in their wardrobe. Green dresses were most prevalent in the wardrobes of sixteen percent of the women. Almost thirteen percent of the women had predominantly gray wardrobes. Navy and brown predominated in eight percent of the wardrobes. Red, black, and white were predominant in one wardrobe. Blue green, yellow and orange were not mentioned by the respondents.

TABLE V
PREDOMINANT COLOR OR COLORS
IN THE WARDROBES OF A SELECTED GROUP
OF WOMEN 65 YEARS OF AGE AND OVER

	Faculty n=14	Clerical n=10	Total n=24
Blue	7	9	16
Green	3	1	4
Gray	2	1	3
Navy	1	1	2
Brown	2	0	2
Red	1	0	1
Black	1	0	1
White	1	0	1

The second objective of the report was to determine whether changes in bodily size or bodily color affect the color choice in dresses for older women. The women were asked whether they had noticed a change in skin texture and/or color in the last five to ten years. Seventy-one percent of the women indicated that a change in their skin color and/or texture had

occurred. In an open-end question, the women were asked to state the changes that were evident to them. Table VI shows that a change in skin color was evident to sixty-five percent of those women noting a change in their skin. A change in skin texture was evident to forty-one percent of the women; and twelve percent of the women who noticed a change in the skin were conscious of wrinkles. Three women stated that a change had occurred, but they could not pinpoint what it was because the change had been gradual. No change was mentioned by the respondents about the color of the skin around the eyes, more evident blood vessels, or brown spots on the hands and face.

TABLE VI

CHANGES IN THE SKIN COLOR AND TEXTURE EVIDENT TO THE RESPONDENT
IN THE PAST FIVE TO TEN YEARS AND SKIN CHARACTERISTICS OF AGING
OBSERVABLE TO THE INTERVIEWER

Skin Changes	Interviewee's Opinion n=17	Interviewer's Observations n=15
Wrinkles	2	13
Brown spots on face and/or hands	0	12
Change in skin color	11	6
Blood vessels more evident	0	5
Change in skin texture	7	3
Cannot pinpoint the change	3	0

The interviewer noted the signs of aging of the respondents that were evident to her at the time of the interview. Since no previous contact had been made with the women, the interviewer did not know what changes had

taken place in the last five to ten years. Signs of aging in the skin color and texture were noted by the interviewer for fifteen of the women. The interviewer noticed eighty-seven percent had wrinkles; eighty percent had brown spots or atrophy on the hands or face; forty percent had a skin color characteristic of aging; three percent had evident blood vessels; and twenty percent had a crepiness in skin texture.

Almost ninety-two percent of the women noticed a change in the color and texture of their hair in the past five to ten years. All of the women noting a change stated that their hair had begun to gray or had turned white. One woman recognized that her hair had a coarser texture. Only five of the twenty-four women noticed a change in their eye color. Four of the women noticed that their eyes had faded in color, and one woman reported that the color of her eyes had deepened.

Eight of the twenty-two women who had noticed a change in their skin, eyes and/or hair revealed that the change had not affected their color preferences in clothing. The remaining fourteen women stated that the changes in their physical coloring had affected their color choices in clothing. Ten of the fourteen respondents felt that they could no longer wear brown or yellow, and three women stated that black was difficult or impossible to wear. Lavendar and white were each mentioned as unflattering colors for the older woman's changing complexion. Some of the women discovered that certain colors were more flattering since their hair, skin or eyes had changed. Three women stated that they could wear gray successfully now. Two women revealed that rose or pink could now be worn, and one woman found that blue was more flattering. Brighter colors were preferred by two women.

Forty-one percent of the women stated that they had noticed a change in bodily weight in the last five to ten years. Those women noting a change

were asked what type of change had taken place. Sixty-six percent of the women decreased in bodily weight, twenty-two percent increased in weight, and twenty-two percent noticed a definite reapportionment.

All the women were asked if they had noticed a change in the distribution of bodily weight. Six women replied affirmatively and eighteen negatively. Those women replying affirmatively were asked in an open-end question to describe the change, Table VII. Eighty-three percent of the women responding felt that weight had settled across the abdomen. Thirty-three percent of the women felt that their hips were larger. One respondent stated that her waist had thickened, one stated that her limbs were smaller, and one stated that she had a dowager's hump.

TABLE VII

PROBABLE CHANGES IN THE DISTRIBUTION OF WEIGHT
DUE TO AGING OBSERVED BY THE INTERVIEWER
AND EVIDENT TO THE RESPONDENTS IN THE PAST FIVE TO TEN YEARS

Bodily Changes	Interviewee's Opinion n=6	Interviewer's Observation n=10
Larger Abdomen	5	6
Larger Hips	2	4
Thickened Waist	1	4
Sagging Bust	0	3
Heavier Upperarm	0	1
Double Chin	0	1
Smaller Limbs	1	1
Dowager's Hump	1	1

Although only six women reported a change in distribution of weight, the interviewer was aware of a distribution of weight characteristic of older people in ten women. The interviewer had no proof that the change had occurred in the past five to ten years. The interviewer felt that sixty percent of the ten women appeared to have a large abdomen. Forty percent of the women had a thick waist and large hips. A sagging bust was noted on thirty percent of the women. A double chin and dowager's hump were each noted on a respondent. None of the women felt that the changes in bodily size or distribution of weight had affected their color choices.

Table VIII shows the tabulation of two questions. The respondents were asked if the color of dresses available in their size were satisfactory, sometimes satisfactory or unsatisfactory. The women were to evaluate the satisfaction with the range of colors available where they shopped, whether it was in Manhattan or elsewhere. Then the women were asked what size in a ready-made dress they usually wore. Ten women reported wearing a misses size; and fourteen women wore half-sizes. Fifty percent of the women wearing misses dresses were satisfied with the range of colors available where they shopped. Thirty percent were sometimes satisfied and twenty percent were unsatisfied.

Forty-three percent of the women wearing half-sizes found the colors available in dresses satisfactory; thirty-six percent found them sometimes satisfactory, and twenty-one percent found them unsatisfactory. When the misses and half-sizes were combined, forty-six percent of the dress colors were satisfactory, thirty-three percent were sometimes satisfactory, and twenty-one percent were unsatisfactory.

Several women who wore large sizes (18, 20, 18 1/2, 20 1/2) expressed greater dissatisfaction with colors available in their size ranges than the group as a whole. One of the women found the range of colors satisfactory, three found them sometimes satisfactory, and two found them unsatisfactory.

TABLE VIII

THE READY-MADE DRESS SIZE WORN BY THE RESPONDENT AND
THE SATISFACTION EXPRESSED WITH THE RANGE OF DRESS COLORS AVAILABLE

Size	Frequency	Form of Satisfaction		
		Satisfactory	Sometimes Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Misses				
8	0			
10	1	1		
12	3	1	1	1
14	1	1		
16	2	2		
18	2		1	1
20	1		1	
22	0	—	—	—
Sub-total	10	5	3	2
Half-Size				
12 1/2	1	1		
14 1/2	5	2	2	1
16 1/2	5	2	2	1
18 1/2	2	1	1	
20 1/2	1			1
22 1/2	0			
24 1/2	0	—	—	—
Sub-total	14	6	5	3
TOTAL		11	8	5

In attempting to determine whether the respondents are influenced by others in their color choices for dresses, the women were asked if they often, seldom, or never shopped with someone. Seven of the women reported they always shopped with someone. Nine women sometimes had a companion when shopping, and eight women were never accompanied when they shopped. The women who had shopping companions were asked the person's relationship to them, Table IX. Forty-one percent of the women shopped with a friend; thirty-five percent shopped with a sister; twelve percent shopped with a niece; six percent shopped with their mother; and six percent shopped with their husbands. None of the women interviewed shopped with a daughter, granddaughter or daughter-in-law.

TABLE IX
RESPONDENTS RELATIONSHIP TO SHOPPING COMPANION

Relationship	Frequency
Friend	7
Sister	6
Niece	2
Husband	1
Mother	1

Twelve of the sixteen women who had shopping companions stated that the companion made suggestions about the color of dresses for church or afternoon wear. Four women reported that no suggestions were given about the color of clothing. The twelve women whose shopping companions made

suggestions about the color of purchases were asked what colors their companions recommended. The twelve women gave a total of seventeen replies. Twenty-four percent of the shopping companions stated that the respondent should wear brighter colors; twenty-four percent considered line and style before color; and eighteen percent did not mention a particular color. Eleven percent of the shopping companions informed the respondent as to whether the color looked nice on her. Dark red, brown, blue and tan were mentioned as colors recommended by shopping companions.

The interviewer inquired if the respondents shopping partner stated any reasons for the colors they recommended. Nine of the twelve respondents replied that their companions stated no reasons when recommending color or giving advice about color. Two of the companions stated that the recommended color was a wise choice because it did not look conservative and stuffy. One companion recommended a color for the respondent because it was the companion's favorite color.

Nine of the twelve women agreed with their companions on her color choice and suggestions. Three women did not agree with their companion. Two women disagreed with their companion because she encouraged buying brighter colors. A third woman had a stronger preference for blue than her companion.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The selected group of retired Manhattan women 65 years of age and over selected the cool colors--blue, green, and purple--as their favorite colors in clothing. The majority of the favorite colors were classed as blue green, medium blue, and blue black. Ryan (24) stated that blue has been the favorite color for dresses in every study with older women's preferences.

Provided the respondents could buy a church or afternoon dress for summer, almost one-third of the women would select a pink dress. The range of blues accounted for the largest number of choices for summer and for fall when the color categories were not sub-divided into the various hues and values. If the respondents could buy a dress for fall, two-fifths of the respondents would select a red dress. Green ranked as the second choice for a fall dress.

Most of the women considered if the colors for church or afternoon dresses were becoming, if the colors were liked, if the colors would be appropriate for social occasions and if the colors harmonized with their accessories. Nine-tenths of the clerical workers considered if the color of the dress was basic, while only one-third of the retired faculty members considered this factor. Less than one-third of the women considered if a color was in current fashion when they purchased a dress for church or afternoon wear.

Three-fifths of the women stated that black, navy and/or blue were colors always included in their wardrobe. Half of the faculty members and four-fifths of the clerical workers had essential colors always to be included in their wardrobes.

Almost three-fourths of the least liked colors for clothing were the warm colors with brown heading the list. Bivin (6) and Decker (11) respectively found brown and red-yellow the least liked colors in their studies. Red and yellow were frequently chosen as the least liked color in clothing by the respondents. Purple accounted for over one-half of the cool colors disliked in clothing.

After the respondents had been asked their favorite colors in clothing, their least liked colors, and their color choices for summer and fall, they were asked the predominant color in their wardrobe. Blue predominated in nine-tenths of the retired clerical workers wardrobes and one-half of the retired faculty members wardrobes. Green was second in predominance. The favorite colors of the older women parallel the predominant colors in the women's wardrobes.

Almost three-fourths of retired women indicated that a change had occurred in their skin color and/or texture in the past five to ten years. Almost all of the women noticed a change in the color of their hair; approximately one-fourth of the women noted a change in the texture of their hair and the color of their eyes. Gilbert (13) found that the change in hair and skin are probably the most obvious and most personally distressing changes occurring with age. Two-thirds of the women noting changes in skin, eyes, and/or hair revealed that the change had affected their color preferences. Many of the women found colors which were formerly attractive were now unbecoming such as brown, yellow and black. Some women discovered that certain colors were more flattering since their hair, skin, or eyes had changed such as gray, rose and blue.

Observations made by the interviewer indicate that the interviewees were quite conscious of the changes in their hair and eyes but many did not recognize or did not realize many of the changes occurring to the skin texture and color.

Two-fifths of the women noticed a change in weight in the past five to ten years and only one-fourth noticed a change in the distribution of weight. For the women noting a change in the distribution of weight, almost four-fifths stated that weight had settled across the abdomen and one-third stated that weight had settled in the hips. Only one woman specifically stated that her waist had thickened. Over half of the women in Blair's (14) study stated that their waist had thickened. The women in the present study were not asked what changes in distribution of weight caused problems in buying ready-to-wear dresses as they were in Blair's study. The women were asked if they noticed a change in bodily weight or distribution of weight and if the change affected color preferences. No change in color preferences occurred when the women changed in weight or distribution of weight. The women appeared in excellent physical condition for a group of women 65 plus.

Women wearing the half size dresses were slightly more dissatisfied with the range of colors available in dresses in comparison to the women wearing misses dresses. The women wearing the larger sizes in both the half size and misses were more dissatisfied with the available colors than the women wearing the other sizes. Only one of the six women wearing a larger size was satisfied with the range of dress colors available. Hargett (14) found similar results with a group of older women in Tennessee.

Almost two-thirds of the women had a shopping companion at some time. Three-fourth of the shopping companions were a friend or a sister. The

majority of the companions made suggestions about the color of dresses the respondent considered buying. The companions suggested a variety of colors but the most recurring advice was that the respondent choose brighter colors. The shopping companions seldom stated reasons for their advice or suggestions about color; and most of the respondents agreed with their companions on color choices and selection.

CHAPTER VI

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESEARCH

The present study was conducted during the last two weeks of April and the first week of May. Possibly the women were more conscious of the range of spring colors than the range of fall colors because of the time of the interview. Similar studies should be done in the fall to see if comparable results are obtained.

Some differences in results were noted between the faculty and clerical workers. Correlations were vague because the number of women in the study was small. The sample should be large enough so that answers given by people of different socio-economic backgrounds such as retired faculty members and clerical workers could be analyzed separately and/or correlated.

The sample fabric color chart was helpful in facilitating communication about color. The satin fabric chart was used because of the wide range of hues and values, but the colors were all quite intense. In a similar study, a fabric chart of dull crepes, or serge might be used because they would not reflect as much light as the satin fabrics. A crepe fabric chart which has a wide range of hues, dark and light values, and bright and dull intensities would be more satisfactory. The fabric swatches should be large enough that the women could visualize a dress in the color.

Almost one-third of the women voluntarily showed the interviewer garments from their wardrobe. In a similar study, the interviewer might look at the actual wardrobe of the respondents instead of using a fabric or paper color chart since the women in this age group seem to enjoy being interviewed.

A number of women who shopped alone or with others mentioned that a sales person had influenced their purchases. An analysis might be conducted

to discover the amount and type of influence the sales person has on the older woman's purchases.

With increased knowledge and awareness of color, the soft, grayed colors are often desired. The color preferences of women with formal color training could be compared to women having no formal color training. A longitudinal study of girl's and women's color preferences through the years could be investigated.

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APPENDIX A
QUESTIONNAIRE

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What are your favorite colors in clothing?
Why would you choose this color?
2. If you could buy a dress for this summer, what color would it be?
Why would you choose this color?
3. If you could buy a dress for this fall, what color would it be?
Why would you choose this color?
4. When you buy a dress for church wear or afternoon, what color factors do you consider? Do you consider
 - a. whether it is a becoming color
 - b. whether you like the color
 - c. whether it will meet your social demands
 - d. whether the color is in fashion
 - e. whether it is a basic color
 - f. whether the color is appropriate for many seasons
 - g. whether you have accessories to go with the color of dress
5. Is there any color of church or afternoon dress you would always want in your wardrobe?
Why would you always want to include a dress of this color in your wardrobe?
6. What is your least liked color for your own afternoon or church dresses?
Why is this your least liked color?
7. Do you have things of this color or colors in your wardrobe?
How did these article(s) get in your wardrobe?
8. Do you relate your purchases with the colors in your present wardrobe?
_____ yes _____ no
9. What color or colors are predominant in your wardrobe?
10. Have you noticed any changes in your skin color and texture in the last five to ten years?
_____ yes _____ no
If yes, describe these changes.

Interviewee's Opinion

- ☐ a. brown spots on the face or hands
- ☐ b. changes in skin color
- ☐ c. blood vessels more evident
- ☐ d. wrinkles
- ☐ e. reddening around the eyes
- ☐ f. change in skin texture
- ☐ g. others

Interviewer's Opinion

- ☐ a. brown spots on the face or hands
- ☐ b. changes in skin color
- ☐ c. blood vessels more evident
- ☐ d. wrinkles
- ☐ e. reddening around the eyes
- ☐ f. change in skin texture
- ☐ g. others

11. Have you noticed any changes in the appearance of your eyes or your hair in the past five to ten years?

☐ yes

☐ no

If yes, describe these changes.

12. How have these bodily changes affected your clothing color preferences for church or afternoon dresses?

- ☐ a. no change in color preferences
- ☐ b. don't like to wear _____
- ☐ c. prefer _____ hues
- ☐ d. others _____

13. Have you noticed a change in bodily weight in the past five to ten years? If so, what type of change has taken place?

☐ yes

☐ no

- ☐ a. none
- ☐ b. increase
- ☐ c. decrease
- ☐ d. reapportionment

14. Have you noticed a change in the distribution of the body weight?

☐ yes

☐ no

If yes, describe the changes.

Interviewee's Opinion

- ☐ a. thickened waist
- ☐ b. heavier upperarm
- ☐ c. double chin
- ☐ d. sagging bust
- ☐ e. dowager's hump
- ☐ f. larger abdomen
- ☐ g. others

Interviewer's Opinion

- ☐ a. thickened waist
- ☐ b. heavier upperarm
- ☐ c. double chin
- ☐ d. sagging bust
- ☐ e. dowager's hump
- ☐ f. larger abdomen
- ☐ g. others

15. Have the changes in your bodily size or distribution of weight affected your color choices? If so, how?

☐ yes

☐ no

16. Are the dresses in colors which you prefer available where you shop?
Are the colors

☐ satisfactory? ☐ sometimes satisfactory? ☐ unsatisfactory?

17. What size in a ready-made dress do you usually wear?

- ☐ a. 8
- ☐ b. 10
- ☐ c. 12
- ☐ d. 14
- ☐ e. 16
- ☐ f. 18
- ☐ g. 20
- ☐ h. 22
- ☐ i. 24

- ☐ a. 12 1/2
- ☐ b. 14 1/2
- ☐ c. 16 1/2
- ☐ d. 18 1/2
- ☐ e. 20 1/2
- ☐ f. 22 1/2
- ☐ g. 24 1/2

18. Does someone often, seldom or never shop with you when you go and look for afternoon dresses or church wear?

☐ often

☐ seldom

☐ never

19. What relationship is the person or persons to you?

- ☐ a. daughter
- ☐ b. husband
- ☐ c. friend
- ☐ d. granddaughter
- ☐ e. sister
- ☐ f. daughter-in-law
- ☐ g. others

20. Does anyone with whom you shop make suggestions as to the color of dresses that you should choose?

☐ yes

☐ no

21. What colors does your _____ recommend for you?

22. Does your _____ state any reasons why you should choose the color or colors?

23. Do you agree with _____ in his (her) choice of colors for you?

_____ yes

_____ no

If not, how do your choices differ?

COLOR PREFERENCES IN CLOTHING OF A
SELECTED GROUP OF RETIRED WOMEN
65 YEARS OF AGE AND OVER

by

MARGARET HELEN SUGHRUE

B. S., Kansas State University, 1965

AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of Clothing and Textiles

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1966

The number of people 65 years of age and over increased 500 percent in the United States from 1900 to 1960. With the increased number of older women, thought needs to be given to their clothing needs and preferences. This study was concerned with the color preferences in clothing of women sixty-five years of age and over. An interview schedule was developed to secure information from twenty-four women who were retired faculty members or clerical workers from Kansas State University in Manhattan, Kansas.

The cool colors--green, blue, and purple--were selected by the women as their favorite colors in clothing. The majority of the women stated that values or tints of blue green, medium blue or blue black were their favorite colors.

Provided the women could buy a church or afternoon dress for summer and for fall, pink and red respectively were the most frequently chosen color for the dress. Although the women reported that blue or cool colors were their favorite colors in clothing, the women would choose the warm colors of pink and red if a dress could be purchased.

When purchasing dresses for church or afternoon wear, the women considered if the colors were becoming, if the colors were liked, if the colors were appropriate for their social occasions and if the colors correlated with their accessories. Fewer women considered if the colors were appropriate for many seasons and if the colors were basic. Less than one-third of the women considered if the color was in current fashion.

The respondents were asked if any color was always included in their wardrobe. Half of the faculty members and four-fifths of the clerical workers stated that black, navy and/or blue dresses were always included in their wardrobe.

Almost three-fourths of the women stated that the warm colors were their least liked colors in clothing and the color brown headed the list. Red and yellow were other warm colors disliked by the respondents. Purple accounted for over one-half of the cool colors disliked.

Blue was the predominant color in nine-tenths of the clerical workers' wardrobes and one-half of the faculty members' wardrobes. The women's favorite colors in clothing paralleled the predominant colors in their wardrobe.

Most of the women indicated that a change had occurred in their hair color in the past five to ten years; and three-fourths of the women indicated a change had occurred in their skin color and/or texture. Fewer women noticed a change in the color of their eyes and the texture of their hair. The majority of the women noting physical changes characteristic of aging revealed the change had affected their color preferences in clothing. Brown, black and yellow were now unbecoming to the women. Gray, rose and blue were mentioned as more flattering colors because of the physical changes accompanying aging.

Two-fifths of the women noticed a change in weight in the past five to ten years and only one-fourth of the women noticed a change in the distribution of bodily weight. The women noting a change in the distribution of weight stated the weight had settled across the abdomen and hips. Only one woman mentioned that her waistline had thickened in the past five to ten years. No change in color preference occurred when the women changed in weight or distribution of weight.

Women wearing the half size dresses were slightly more dissatisfied with the range of colors available in dresses in comparison to the women

wearing misses dresses. The women wearing the larger sizes in both the half sizes and misses sizes were more dissatisfied with the colors available in dresses than those wearing other sizes.

Almost two-thirds of the women were accompanied at some time when they shopped for church or afternoon dresses. The majority of the shopping companions made suggestions about the color of dresses the respondent considered buying. The most frequent advise of the companions was that the respondent choose brighter colored dresses.